

# Thanks, But I Won't Need a Razor for a While

By AD3 Anthony Leonard,  
VQ-3 Sea Duty Comp

“**W**hat better way to bring in a New Year than to do a little muddin’ in a four by four.” That’s what my good friend, Josh, and I thought. His wife and my girlfriend were asleep in Josh’s house, so we ducked out to have some fun.

First, though, we had to fix Josh’s truck, a 1985 Ford Ranger, with a 3.8 V-6 engine and a Holley two-barrel carburetor. He had been having trouble with the truck for about a week. Originally, he had installed a new thermostat and distributor. He knew I had experience working on cars, and I knew I had to fix the truck if we were to go play in the mud that morning.

I pulled the breather and loosened the distributor so I could set the timing. I asked him to turn the key a few times to see if the motor would fire. After three tries, I leaned over the engine and turned the distributor to advance the timing. Out of habit, Josh pumped the gas pedal while turning the key, which flooded the carburetor. “I smell gas,” he said, as I retarded the timing.

“It will burn off once the engine fires,” I replied. I barely had finished my statement when the engine fired, and the gas in the carburetor ignited. The engine backfired through the carburetor, causing a big flash of light and flames.

“Are you OK?” Josh asked. “What smells?”

“Aw, I just burned some hair off my head,” I answered. “I needed a haircut anyway.” Dis-

Whether you’re a do-it-yourself or a paid mechanic, you need to wear the prescribed protective gear.



missing that topic, I asked, “How did you install this distributor, Josh? It seems like it’s out a hundred and eighty degrees.”

I then asked Josh to start the engine one more time, and she fired right up. The only things left to do were to set the timing, put the breather back on, and shut the hood. Afterward, we went back into the house to tell the girls we were going to play in the mud. On the way, Josh again commented that I smelled like burned hair.

As we entered the house, the heat hit my face like a freight train. I hurried to the bathroom to look in the mirror and see why it hurt so badly. The burns covered most of my face, including my eyelids. If I hadn’t been wearing glasses, I might have been blinded for life.

About the same time, the girls woke up. My girlfriend suggested we go to the emergency room, where I spent five hours taking painkillers; holding cold, wet cloths on my face; and wondering if I would be scarred for life. The doctors assured me I wouldn’t have any lasting mementos on my face if I took care of my problem as they advised.

The potential for flames or an explosion always exists when you work on older car motors with carburetors. My advice is to wear protective gear when working on anything dangerous. ■